

La Coquille
14115 Oakland Mills
San Antonio, Texas 78231-1635

February 19, 1999

Jane Henney, M.D., Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
Department of Health and Human Services
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, Maryland 20857 6877 '99 MAR 30 P1:46

Dear Commissioner Henney:

I have recently heard that the FDA has approved or will soon approve the irradiation of beef for human consumption. I would like to add my voice to those you undoubtedly have already heard against this practice.

It is, in my estimation, insane to zap any food stuffs with high doses of radiation and then expect people to knowingly and willingly eat them.

We now in the U.S. have one of the safest food supplies in the world as far as freshness is concerned. The incidence of food poisoning or the ingestion of rotten meat is so minuscule it doesn't warrant such a radical solution, foisted on the population as a whole. One of the most disturbing aspects of your ill-considered action is the fact that irradiated beef will not be identified as such. If the practice is so safe, then why not tell us when it's being done? Why can't you, in our much-touted democracy, let us choose whether we want to consume irradiated beef or not?

My family has already cut down drastically on the consumption of beef because we don't like the hormones, antibiotics, and other inappropriate matter given to cattle. And we don't like what the cattle industry has done to Oprah Winfrey, who tried to shed some light on the subject. Beef irradiation is the last straw. Now we won't consume beef in any way, shape or form, particularly because you deny us the right to know which beef is irradiated and which isn't.

Beef irradiation could very well mean the death knell of the cattle industry, because most other informed Americans probably feel as we do. Since it appears you are working in the best interests of the cattle industry and not in ours, you should perhaps inform the industry of this. This proposed action of irradiation can only make business worse for them, not better.

I really would like your considered reply, but more importantly, I would like you to cease and desist in the very idea of irradiating beef or any other food product. You have no right to tinker with our health and safety in this manner.

Yours sincerely,



Loretta Van Coppenolle
on behalf of the entire Van Coppenolle family

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